

VZCZCXRO6529
PP RUEHCN RUEHGH
DE RUEHIN #1804 2220129
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 100129Z AUG 07
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6324
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7117
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 1278
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 2028
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 5997
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 0457
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 8362

UNCLAS TAIPEI 001804

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DEPT FOR AIT/W, EAP/TC, INR/EAP, G/TIP

FROM AIT KAOHSIUNG BRANCH OFFICE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Southern Taiwan Showing Signs of Transformation in
Combating TIP

REF: 2007 Taipei 1561

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¶1. (U) Summary: AIT/K has offered a variety of TIP events to Southern Taiwan audiences, resulting in increased awareness of the victim-centered approach. Local government agencies and non-governmental organizations have eagerly accepted TIP seminars and training events, but concede that they must do more to better address trafficking issues. Additional training from AIT would help. Local law enforcement officials have broken with past practice and have begun to recognize exploited laborers as trafficking victims. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Audiences in southern Taiwan have eagerly accepted AIT/K's offer to share effective methods in handling TIP cases. To date, thousands of southern Taiwan police officials (street-level officers and high-ranking officials), hundreds of staff from the newly-established National Immigration Administration Bureau, and dozens of prosecutors have received instructions on how to identify potential TIP victims and better act on TIP cases.

¶3. (U) Recent roundtable discussions and meetings in coordination with G/TIP Senior Coordinator Mark Taylor's visit to Kaohsiung (REFTEL) facilitated open dialogues between local law enforcement officials, NGOs, and prosecutors. Digital video conferences sponsored by Taipei in coordination with AIT/K have provided a platform for inter-agency communication. As a result, many southern Taiwan officials have expressed to AIT that the island's current response to the trafficking problem is still inadequate. AIT continues to encourage our Taiwan partners to pursue a comprehensive anti-trafficking act to protect TIP victims and to adequately punish traffickers.

¶4. (SBU) Two recent events in Chiayi County, where AIT/K has strong TIP contacts, demonstrate that a transition is beginning to take place. On July 30th, Chiayi County police identified a group of foreign workers as victims of labor exploitation. Rather than following the past practice of placing them in detention centers, the victims were placed into shelters and are being provided legal aid. Wang Mei-chuan, Division Chief of the Chiayi County Foreign Affairs Police, who has complained about the difficulty of distinguishing victims from law breakers, called AIT/K to report that this group would be treated as confirmed victims. The Chiayi District Prosecutors Office has also been an active partner, granting those foreign workers protection in accordance with the witness protection law as well as assisting them to claim compensation and pursue restitution of their withheld salaries.

¶5. (U) Demonstrating their commitment to rooting out the official corruption which enables traffickers to escape prosecution, on August 6th, the Chiayi District Prosecutors Office took into custody NIA Chiayi Branch Office Director Lin Shun-dang. Lin is suspected of colluding with brokers and traffickers to warn them of impending raids. Lin is further suspected of strong-arming, even arresting, foreign laborers that brokers found difficult to control.

¶6. (U) Comment. Many southern Taiwan officials have expressed a desire to punish traffickers, while adopting the victim-centered approach in their dealings with confirmed victims. While these signs of progress at the local level are promising, local officials complain about budget shortfalls. At the local and national level, the Taiwan authorities must do more to better identify and protect victims of trafficking. Additional training from AIT and other USG agencies would help. End Comment.

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Young